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RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5010
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8125
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1013
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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IRAQ - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Wednesday morning papers front-paged the conclusion of senior working-level Sino-Japanese talks on the joint development of undersea natural resources in the East China Sea. Specifics of joint development projects proposed by China are not known.

¶1. "Crisis in Iraq: Unity Needed to Form New Government"
An editorial in the moderate Tokyo Shimbun commented (3/8): "Sectarian and ethnic conflict continues unabated in Iraq. Although it has been decided that the National Parliament will convene on March 12, conflicting interests among rival groups have caused the formation of a new government to founder. We hope that rival groups will not forget the desire of the people for peace and order and will join hands to form a new government. An average of 30 people are dying each day in the conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis that began with the bombing of a Shiite mosque, bringing the number of dead to 400 over the past two weeks as the nation is in a situation close to civil war.... The view is strong that the bombing was conducted by terrorists attempting to foment civil war, but senior officials in the transitional government are also responsible for the deadlock in forming a coalition government that has given the terrorists an opening and deepened sectarian divisions...."

¶2. "The Bush administration, which does not want to appear partial to any particular group, appears to be watching the consultations carefully. A failure to quickly launch a permanent government and restore order in Iraq, though, would affect plans for the withdrawal of coalition troops. The GOJ has been forced to postpone the start of its pullout of Ground Self-Defense Force troops from the southern Iraqi city of Samawah to April or later."

